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Chairman's summary of the multi-stakeholder dialogue on tourism of the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Addendum

A. Introduction

1. At its seventh session, the Commission on Sustainable Development continued the tradition, started at its sixth session, of including a multi-stakeholder dialogue as part of its official proceedings. The purpose of the multi-stakeholder dialogue segment is to enable participatory elaboration of common approaches for, and exchange of experiences between, Governments and major groups in specific economic sectors. The tourism segment involved representatives of business and industry, workers and trade unions, local authorities and non-governmental organizations, and was held from 19 to 21 April 1999. It was noted that this dialogue would illuminate subsequent discussions of the Commission on Sustainable Development both in the high-level segment and in the remainder of the Commission's work seeking for specific outcomes for the seventh session of the Commission on sustainable tourism including an agreed work programme in this area.

2. The tourism segment followed the format previously agreed by the Bureau of the Commission.[1] Lead organizations invited by the Commission on Sustainable Development secretariat to assist in the preparations for the tourism segment were responsible for consulting with their constituencies to draft the "dialogue starter" papers and to organize the participation of the delegations from their sectors. These lead organizations included the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the International Hotel and Restaurant Association, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions/Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), and the Commission on Sustainable Development non-governmental organizations Steering Committee.

3. The segment focused on four themes highlighting important aspects of sustainable tourism. These themes included (a) industry initiatives for sustainable tourism, (b) influencing consumer behaviour, (c) promoting broad-based sustainable development while safeguarding the integrity of local cultures and protecting the environment and (d) coastal impact of tourism.

4. There was a lively, positive and focused exchange on issues of key concern, with participants seeking to identify

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their priorities for consideration and making a genuine effort to improve mutual understanding and cooperation. The present summary is not a verbatim record but seeks to reflect the issues on which participants showed general agreement, areas that would benefit from further dialogue and elaboration, and specific initiatives announced or proposed by the participants.

B. Industry initiatives for sustainable tourism

5. Participants recognized the global economic significance of tourism. It is a growth industry accounting for more than 10 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP) and offers significant employment opportunities. Industry forecasts suggest that there will continue to be rapid development in this sector. It was noted, however, that many people are not able to participate in tourism owing to poverty and inadequate wages. It was also recognized that tourism has significant social, cultural and environmental impacts.

6. Discussions and presentations demonstrated the various voluntary initiatives launched by industry to promote sustainable tourism, including certification programmes and codes of conduct, at the national and international levels. Participants supported these existing initiatives to encourage sustainable tourism and the commitment of industry to do more. *Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry* was highlighted as a policy framework developed by industry. The willingness of industry to further develop this framework through multi-stakeholder processes was welcomed.

7. The existing voluntary initiatives were identified as being complementary to national and local regulatory compliance efforts, as these initiatives are designed to be cost-effective means of surpassing existing regulatory requirements. It was agreed that the range of measures from regulation to voluntary initiatives and agreements were appropriate for further efforts to achieve sustainable development in the travel and tourism sector. Voluntary measures developed with multi-stakeholder participation, mutual trust and respect, transparency, monitoring, and assessment and verification were seen as most likely to generate confidence and support from all parties.

8. Participants referred to numerous public and private systems of certification, including the Green Globe programme. This was promoted by industry as an example of a global certification standard in tourism, and industry agreed to put in place a multi-stakeholder advisory group for this programme. There was general support for greater discussion and promotion of "best practices" and for further research to identify such practices that promoted sustainable development in the tourism sector. It was suggested that consideration be given to a review of existing voluntary initiatives in this sector, building on the work initiated by the Commission at its sixth session and the subsequent Toronto Workshop to Identify the Key Elements of a Review of Voluntary Initiatives and Agreements (10–12 March 1999).

9. Although tourism has significant economic benefits for many countries and communities, it also has adverse social and economic impacts in many locations. Concerns in this context included leakage of revenues, low wages, poor working conditions, child labour and sex tourism. Participants emphasized the need to reinvest in local communities, to encourage procurement of local products and services, to promote vocational training and education, and to eliminate the sexual and economic exploitation of women and children. Programmes for retraining and re-employment could provide a social safety net for communities adversely affected by tourism development and should be promoted by Governments, international organizations and major groups. Issues related to the special needs of older tourists who make up a growing number of travellers were also raised. It was agreed that special attention should be given to implementing existing agreements, codes and regulations that seek to regulate or eliminate these conditions, such as those produced by the International Labour Organization (ILO). On the issue of waste management, there was agreement to make further efforts to reduce packaging waste associated with the travel and tourism industry.

10. Participants agreed that multi-stakeholder participation, openness and transparency at all levels were critical in achieving sustainable tourism. There was particular reference to the positive role that workers and trade unions could play through participation in efforts by business to identify and implement sustainability targets. There was agreement that partnership arrangements and multi-stakeholder processes were appropriate means of participation and cooperation among the stakeholders in the tourism sector.

11. There was general agreement by all participants on the need to develop, implement and use indicators for sustainable tourism. While work is taking place in several different organizations, better focus and coordination of these efforts are required, possibly at the international level, keeping in mind the need to base any indicator sets on local

conditions and priorities. Identifying the limits to social and environmental carrying capacity in tourism destinations was highlighted as an important priority. The Commission on Sustainable Development should play a role in promoting agreement on tourism indicators that incorporate environmental, cultural and social criteria. The need for reliable information and identification of best practices by industry was highlighted.

12. It was emphasized that a global framework and plan of action for sustainable tourism must be coupled with implementation and decision-making at the local level, as well as at the regional and national levels. The value of Local Agenda 21 as an enabling framework for partnerships was recognized. Local Agenda 21 planning is an established mechanism for facilitating multi-stakeholder cooperation, and can be effectively employed in tourist destinations to promote sustainable tourism practices. Participants noted with appreciation the new Memorandum of Understanding signed by ICLEI and WTTC to integrate the principles of *Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry* and Local Agenda 21 planning to support sustainable development in major tourism destinations around the world.

C. Influencing consumer behaviour

13. Participants emphasized the importance of education as a tool to influence consumer and producer behaviour so as to promote sustainable tourism, particularly when education efforts and related educational materials are developed and applied through multi-stakeholder participation and cooperation. Local Agenda 21 programmes, workplace-based partnerships for education planning and actions for change, non-governmental organization networks, tourism industry associations, educators and educational institutions, tourism information centres, and national and international institutions of education were identified as important channels for sustainable tourism education.

14. Education efforts should focus not only on travellers but also on investors, workers and host communities. Special attention needs to be given to young people and their participation both as recipients of education and as partners in developing education programmes. It was emphasized that these efforts should be applied in both formal and informal education. The ultimate goal of sustainable tourism education should be to move all relevant actors from short-term to long-term thinking and planning.

15. There was agreement that Governments, the tourism industry and other stakeholders should establish programmes to raise public awareness about the impact of tourists on destinations, to promote respect for local communities and their cultures, and to protect the environment. At the invitation of industry representatives, participants agreed to support the "Dodo" education project of WTTC and World Wide Fund for Nature International (WWF), and to participate in development of other, similar programmes. The value of workplace-based programmes to educate workers both as tourists and as service providers for travel and tourism was highlighted. The importance of ensuring that such programmes involved local communities and were relevant to individual destinations and local cultures was noted. Participants endorsed, as a specific initiative, the proposal of local authorities to develop, through multi-stakeholder engagement, destination-specific in-flight educational videos introducing travellers to sustainable tourism practices, and to promote their extensive use by airlines.

16. Some participants expressed concern about the role of the media and the advertising industry, noting the impact they have on consumer perceptions and behaviour. Participants agreed that the media should be encouraged to act as an agent for influencing positive consumer behaviour. Governments were urged to encourage advertising messages that were consistent with sustainable development principles and objectives.

17. There was considerable interest on the part of participants in the global code of ethics being developed by the World Tourism Organization. Multi-stakeholder participation in its development, implementation and monitoring should be encouraged. It was also proposed that a sustainable tourism covenant, to be developed with major groups' participation, could promote higher standards of tourist behaviour.

18. Several programmes for certification of voluntary initiatives were noted. Some concern was expressed about the proliferation of such schemes without international guidelines to assist consumers and producers in understanding their value and effectiveness. There was broad agreement on the need for a set of international guidelines to promote international consistency and provide decision-making tools for consumers and communities. The inclusion of an education component in tourism industry initiatives should be seen as a key criterion in such certification schemes. Several participants emphasized that criteria used in certification schemes should meet or exceed minimum national standards, where they exist, and should include social, cultural and economic aspects as well as environmental considerations. It was emphasized that multi-stakeholder engagement in developing, implementing,

promoting and monitoring such schemes would increase their effectiveness.

19. Several participants endorsed de-marketing strategies as a means to protect sensitive or fragile destinations from damage through overloading. Such strategies could include pricing orientation, omission from guidebooks and promotion among consumers of other tourist sites. De-marketing strategies that influence societal values can take place in both originating and destination counties.

20. Participants supported the idea of an inter-agency effort, with stakeholder participation, to look at current activities aimed at influencing consumer behaviour and improving consumer advocacy. This effort would consider how to enhance the effectiveness of existing initiatives and activities, as well as research and evaluate the impact of price mechanisms and legislation on consumer behaviour. A report on the results of this work could be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2002.

21. Several participants highlighted the link between tourism and health in the context of contagious diseases. Participants attached importance to the involvement of the tourism industry in efforts to address health issues associated with tourism, including human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and other contagious and infectious diseases.

D. Promoting broad-based sustainable development through tourism while safeguarding the integrity of local cultures and protecting the environment

22. Promoting broad-based sustainable development through tourism while safeguarding the integrity of local cultures and protecting the environment requires an effective partnership between key stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels and participation at all levels of tourism planning, development and assessment. The need to develop employer-employee partnerships (including trade unions) with multi-stakeholder support and funding was endorsed.

23. Establishment of a multi-stakeholder working group was proposed and endorsed by several groups. It could work in collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies and organizations. It might consider such issues as (a) financial leakages and how to maximize benefits for local communities, (b) preparing a joint initiative to improve information availability and capacity-building for participation, thus enabling communities to manage social and environmental change and (c) developing a plan to ensure indigenous peoples and other local communities their rights to land, water and other natural resources. The initial results of this working group could be reported to the Commission at its eighth session in 2000.

24. There was considerable concern about the challenges of globalization. Participants felt that multi-stakeholder participation could help mitigate the effects of globalization. The principle of local community participation in decision-making was endorsed. Participants took note of the differences in the objectives of the World Trade Organization and Agenda 21.[2]

25. There was broad agreement that the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities should be respected. Several participants noted that the use of indigenous or local cultures as a "product" to market must be approached with sensitivity, and should include the participation in decision-making of those groups affected by this. Measures to combat the illegal trade in cultural goods, such as the issuing of certificates of origin, should be considered. It was suggested that certification schemes include criteria on local and indigenous participation.

26. In discussing education as an essential tool, participants endorsed the proposal for stakeholders to jointly develop, and employ musicians and other artists to promote, Agenda 21 and sustainable tourism. They asked Governments to join them in this initiative and support the development of networks to provide sustainable development, generally.

27. It was agreed that local authorities and local communities must play the key role in determining their "carrying capacity" for tourism development. There should not be a globally imposed limit and decisions should be based on multi-stakeholder processes at the local level. Different locations will face different requirements and problems. Considerations of carrying capacity should include economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions. Decisions should be made based on the principle of prior informed consent. While not all participants endorsed "eco-taxes", there was support for appropriate pricing of resources, aimed at reflecting the true costs of goods and services. Industry should, in particular, pay its fair share to maintain the natural and cultural assets that tourists wanted to utilize.

E. Coastal impact of tourism

28. Participants recognized that many sustainable development issues are focused around coastal systems, and that tourism is a crucial sector in coastal areas. The particular importance of the coastal impact of tourism on small island developing States (SIDS) was noted, as was the significant challenge posed to coastal communities by climate change.

29. In discussing integrated coastal zone management, participants agreed that there were real biophysical limits to capacity in any particular location as well as cultural limits that should be determined at the local level by the local community. The need for decisions to be made at a local level through a multi-stakeholder process with regard to national and international frameworks was endorsed. Non-governmental organizations proposed the establishment of a multi-stakeholder group at the international level to advise on the planning and implementation of a fully integrated process of coastal tourism development and offered to launch this mechanism in collaboration with government, industry, trade unions and other major groups. Workplace-based planning was proposed as a way to influence consumer habits and choices. Schemes of coastal awards to local coastal communities, such as the Blue Flag campaign in Europe, were highlighted as an effective incentive mechanism to encourage high-quality coastal zone management. It was proposed that new tourism developments should be required to include all relevant sustainable development considerations, including design and implementation of a comprehensive waste management programme.

30. In discussing financial responsibility for infrastructure development and other costs associated with sustainable coastal tourism, participants agreed that the level of financial responsibility from industry and other stakeholders should be determined at the local level. Where local authorities decided to provide public subsidies for infrastructure development or maintenance associated with tourism activities, the nature of the decision should be explicitly understood by the community that would bear the costs, and the decision should involve the local community through a transparent multi-stakeholder process. Participants supported the polluter pays principle. While many participants noted that subsidies could impose costs on the local community, several noted that subsidies could also be beneficial.

31. A variety of measures aimed at mobilizing resources were mentioned, including fast-tracking the Global Environment Facility (GEF), achieving agreement on cost- and profit-sharing formulas for all stakeholders, and encouraging the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other bodies to help address consequences of coastal infrastructure development by making available information on practical sustainable development technologies and ways to monitor the coastal impact of tourism.

32. It was suggested that the Commission on Sustainable Development should invite and seek funding from international agencies such as the World Bank and regional development banks for pilot projects in both the North and the South aimed at illustrating best practices of integrated planning. Some participants emphasized that these programmes should integrate Agenda 21 for travel and tourism with Local Agenda 21 programmes and should serve as benchmarks.

33. In discussing indicators, participants proposed that the Commission on Sustainable Development should encourage international agencies to develop indicators to measure the environmental, social and cultural impacts of coastal tourism. Indicators should be open to independent auditing and placed within a transparent, open framework where stakeholders' various responsibilities were clearly defined. Workshops were noted as a useful tool for disseminating information derived from indicators.

34. Participants agreed that the Commission on Sustainable Development should facilitate funding from international agencies such as the World Bank and from national Governments for integrated environmental, social and economic research on best management practices in regard to design, development and management of tourism projects in coastal regions.

35. Regarding the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), industry representatives proposed that the Commission on Sustainable Development should encourage international agencies, national Governments and industry to fund and support small and medium-sized enterprises in respect of their implementing environmental improvement measures.

36. Local authority representatives proposed that regional coastal management agencies be established, where appropriate, to act as a mechanism for managing coastal area planning. Alternatively, private foundations or non-governmental organizations could take the lead. They also called for a shift from a growth-based economic model to a steady state model.

37. Participants recommended that the Commission on Sustainable Development consider asking the International

Maritime Organization (IMO), with other relevant international agencies, to investigate the enforcement and application of internationally agreed standards and regulations relating to threats to sustainable development/the environment caused by shipping, with particular attention to coastal areas. Some participants noted that flags-of-convenience vessels, including cruise liners servicing tourists, represented an area of particular concern.

38. Union representatives expressed concern at the impact of the recent growth in tourist-related or recreational fishing on traditional and indigenous fishing rights. They also called on the Commission on Sustainable Development to support the right of workers to act as whistle-blowers in respect of unsustainable practices by industry and to promote the protection of workers who acted as such.

Notes

[1] The dialogue segment topics at the Commission on Sustainable Development are drawn from the multi-year programme of work, grouped under the heading of "economic sector/major groups". These topics then become the focus of a twofold process including (a) an intergovernmental debate, based on the report of the Secretary-General and coordinated by the Commission secretariat in close collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies and (b) a multi-stakeholder dialogue, based on the "dialogue starter" papers prepared by the major groups involved in the dialogue in collaboration with the Commission secretariat.

[2] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.